

## Testimony By Ed Wiederstein

## For The House Ag Committee Farm Bill Field Hearing

I would like to thank the Chairman for giving me the opportunity to express my opinion on the present farm bill and the new farm bill now being debated. I will try to make my written comments brief as possible, mainly because I do not like to type.

I am a livestock and grain farmer in that order. I feed hogs and have a herd of purebred Angus cattle. I have approximately 800 acres of crops divided between corn and soybeans, and 80 acres of pasture and hay ground. The current farm bill has provided me extra income above what my hogs and cattle and what little grain I do sell. I feed basically everything I raise. The money I receive from the farm program payments is a small percentage of my gross income.

My opinion of the farm bills is they stifle our ingenuity, take too much of the risk out of crop farming, creates a false land market, is one of the reasons we have mega size crop farms, and gives money to people that have a net worth 90% of the people in this country do not have. One of the choices I seldom hear when talking about the new farm bill is "no farm bill". Realistically, I know the chances of this happening are probably less than the Berlin Wall coming down, but then it did come down.

This spring I will be planting my thirty third crop since I started farming in 1973. I believe everyone of those years I signed up for the farm bill has given me experience with the farm bill. I look back and I can think of some positive aspects of the farm bills. Mainly, when I started, I got a beginning farm operating loan from the FMHA. In the middle 80's, when the Fed changed its stance on monetary policy and caught many farmers with high interest rates, FMHA was there to help farmers. I don't know if I would have survived either one of those periods in my farming career without that help, but I feel that was a positive aspect of the farm bill.

I have seen the changes from very diverse farms to strictly corn/soybean farms, and forget livestock, because that is too much work. I doubt those changes would have been as drastic if not for the generous crop price supports. These generous farm supports really should be called "land support", because the supports accrue to the land owner, not the operator. I am not against the land owner being prosperous, because I own some land, but unintended consequences have created a false land economy. Most farm operators would agree with this.

I mentioned the farm program stifled ingenuity. I mean creating ways to be profitable other than using farm program payments. I will say some have been very ingenuitive when it comes to collecting as much as possible and, yet, abiding by the law. Whether you're a large operator or small, when I hear the words "I couldn't make it without farm program payments", I believe we have really become dependent on the government.

Farmers can be very entrepreneurial, but this dependence sure has suppressed it.

This dependence issue leads me into another issue that at some point we had better face. It is the issue, do I deserve money from the government to, supposedly, support me, any more than the Ace Hardware man in downtown Audubon, or the feed store, the local newspaper, the local flower shop, or the funeral home. Is what they do really any less important than what I do? They are subject to a lot of the same variables as I am. There are a lot of farmers with million dollar net worth receiving thousands of dollars of support. Somehow, that picture just doesn't look right. I have nothing against high net worth, in fact, I'm all for it and want to be one.

I do wish that when times get tough, as they always do, regardless of farm programs, farmers would quit whining about the government should help more. Instead, they need to use their ingenuity to look for the opportunities that are plentiful. Farmers don't like risk, but it is what creates opportunities that lead to profit. Most Ag commodities do not have government support and somehow, they seem to survive and thrive.

What I would like to see the Farm Program include is some help for the beginning farmer in the form of loan guarantees. Continue to offer commodity loans that are well below cost of production to avoid growing for the government. And if society wants to pay us for conservation practices, that is okay, but there are not enough people to police all those practices.

I would, also, like to see trade barriers lowered, so we can have access to foreign markets, environmental regulations that aren't going to put me out of business, and increased funding of basic research, applied research, and new uses research.

Finally, less means more in the long run. Without farm supports, I know there would be adjustments (probably a little painful), but in the end we would be an economic powerhouse in our local communities and globally. Opportunity awaits.

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: Ed Wiederstein
2. Business Address: 1601 150th St  
Audubon, Ia 50025
3. Business Phone Number: 712-563-3096
4. Organization you represent: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:  
farmed for 33 years
6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:  
B.S. Animal Science Iowa State University  
President Iowa Farm Bureau Federation 1995-2001
7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2004.

Name: Ed Wiederstein  
Address: 1601 150th St Audubon, Ia 50005  
Telephone: 712-563-3096  
Organization you represent (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do NOT require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: Ed Wiederstein

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.